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NSC BRIEFING

27 May 1957

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TAIPEI RIOTS

I. On 24 May US Embassy Taipei and USIA station there were sacked by rioting Chinese mobs.

A. Riots began in a demonstration protesting freeing of US army sergeant by US Army court-martial.

1. Last March sergeant killed Chinese peeping-tom.

2. Chinese press ever since has called for his punishment. After acquittal (23 May), press became inflammatory.

3. Same day Nationalist government alerted police and advised Americans to stay off streets.

B. About noon¹⁰⁰⁰ next day (24 May), widow of victim appeared before Embassy, carrying signs in English and Chinese denouncing verdict--so well made as to indicate a professional job.

1. Woman was asked by Government broadcasting company to make a radio speech from in front of Embassy.

2. As result, word of woman's presence at Embassy spread very rapidly and the initial crowd of 200-3000 grew to mob proportions.

3. About 1330, as crowd mood grew uglier, Embassy gates were closed. Shortly thereafter stoning began.

C. Crowd finally broke into Embassy and USIA building three blocks away, wrecking interiors completely

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1. Riots continued with unsuccessful attacks on MAAG compound, US military offices

2. Later Provincial Police Headquarters was attacked in protest against arrest of some student rioters.

D. Government actions to maintain law and order are not yet clear.

1. Initially, small number of police present were inactive--

2. However, at 1900 martial law declared and troops began moving in.

3. By midnight two divisions in city and disorders died down.

4. No further violence reported, but some student discontent at Taichung, city of 200,000 in middle of Taiwan.

E. In addition to destruction of US property, nine Americans injured, one still hospitalized.

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III. Court-martial verdict struck Chinese nationalism in sensitive spot.

A. Carries suggestion of pre-war "extraterritoriality," deeply resented by Chinese.

1. Chinese also dislike being completely dependent on US.

B. Some popular feeling over size and economic status US colony on Taiwan (about 10,000).

1. Great majority US personnel are in Taipei, which is therefore special situation.

2. No serious incidents reported elsewhere in Taiwan.

IV. There is considerable evidence that riots were organized in advance to capitalize on an anticipated strong popular reaction.

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V. The Nationalist Cabinet resigned 25 May.

B. However, President Chiang has refused to accept resignation.

1. Chiang apparently waiting for dust to settle.

C. Press reports Gov't spokesman said Gov't might nevertheless be compelled make "significant personnel changes" later in order to "save Sino-US friendship."

VI. Communist propagandists are having a field day.

A. Peiping has moved to exploit the Taipei riots with propaganda appeals to Chinese "patriotism."

1. Authoritative People's Daily in front page editorial pays tribute to "countrymen" on Taiwan for "rightful nationalist sentiment"--calls for "Chinese unity" in struggle by whole nation for "liberation" from American oppression.

2. Pro-Communist press in Hong Kong has been even more vitriolic--headlines say "Chinese brothers revenge long years of hate."

B. Moscow has followed Peiping's line, cites disorder as demand that "Americans go home."

VII. Press reports that Japanese, Philippine, and South Korean officials are saying that riots will force US to reconsider its policy on status-of-forces.

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